Introduction

The relationship between 'The Church and the Military' has been a challenging one throughout Christian history, with some of its problems anticipated in the ministry of John the Baptist: 'Some soldiers asked him in their turn, "What about us? What must we do?" He said to them, "No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!"' (Luke 3: 14; JB). Quite apart from the perennially vexed debate over Christian ethics and the legitimacy of war, the presentation of soldiers – especially *Roman* soldiers – in the canonical Gospels is decidedly mixed, ranging from their scourging and crucifixion of Christ in the Passion narratives, to his encounter with the centurion at Capernaum (Matthew 8: 5–13; Luke 7: 1–10), and the acknowledgment of Christ as the son of God by another centurion at the foot of the cross (Mark 15: 39). This ambivalence towards soldiers spills over into the Acts of the Apostles, notably in Peter's reception by the centurion Cornelius, possibly the first Gentile convert to Christianity (Acts 10: 10–16), and his escape from a heavily guarded confinement ordered by King Herod (Acts 12). Paul's experience was likewise double-edged, as the details of his lengthy sojourn in protective custody from Jerusalem to Rome serve to illustrate (Acts 21–8). If Paul leaned heavily on military metaphors in speaking of the Christian life (Ephesians 6: 10–17; 2 Timothy 2: 3), the subsequent relationship between the early church and the Roman military was plainly problematic, raising dilemmas that have, if anything, been magnified and sharpened by the destructiveness of industrial warfare and the moral sensibilities of twentieth-century scholarship, beginning with Adolf von Harnack's *Militia Christi* (1905) and C. John Cadoux's *The Early Christian Attitude to War* (1919).[1] Besides a fundamental anxiety over the act of bloodletting, the customs and culture of the army of pagan Rome were steeped

[1] Adolf von Harnack, Militia Christi: *die christliche Religion und der Soldatenstand in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Tübingen, 1905); ET: Militia Christi: *The Christian Religion and the Military in the First Three Centuries* (Philadelphia, PA, 1981); C. John Cadoux, *The Early Christian Attitude to War: A Contribution to the History of Christian Ethics* (London, 1919).

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in idolatry, while soldiers themselves were conspicuous accessories in the brutal and recurrent persecution of the church. Nevertheless, it is apparent from the campaigns of Marcus Aurelius (161–80) that Christians were from an early stage very much present in the Roman army, their existence being both exploited and lamented by Tertullian (apologist and arch-pacifist of the contemporary church), depending on whether he was addressing a pagan or a Christian audience.[2]

Naturally, the Constantinian turn, that epochal shift predicated on the military triumphs of a Christian soldier-emperor from 312 onwards, helped to solve or mitigate these issues in the longer term. The advent of a Christian Roman empire in 380 was the context in which the just war tradition began to emerge in the Western church under Ambrose and Augustine. However, the existence of armies, navies and (much more recently) air forces has remained a double-edged issue for the church, providing a steady flow of thorny challenges (whether pastoral, ethical or political) and, less reliably, a source of practical support and religious inspiration. While comparatively few Christian traditions embraced pacifism and spurned military life altogether (some for sectarian rather than humanitarian motives), for those traditions that took a different position towards the military there were many issues to navigate when dealing with organizations that generally lay outside the conventional structures of the civilian church and which were heavily armed, unusually mobile, often at risk, and chiefly composed of younger men. The articles in this volume explore the complex weave of this relationship over time and space, adopting a multi-directional approach which, broadly speaking, follows six thematic lines: chaplaincy and the religious care and regulation of military organizations; the role of the military in the spread of Christianity; the military and the shaping of church life; the church, the military and the state; the example and influence of Christian martial heroes; and, finally, the church and the memorialization of military experience.

The formal religious care and moral regulation of armed forces has involved the Western church since at least the eighth century, when the provision of clergy to Frankish armies gave rise to the (often controversial) figure of the military chaplain. In this volume, the early functions and challenges of military chaplaincy are reconsidered by

[2] For a recent overview of soldiers and the early church, see Niko Huttunen, *Early Christians Adapting to the Roman Empire: Mutual Recognition* (Leiden, 2020), 138–228.

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Andrew Totten in '"Unclean Hands": Purity, Penance and the Chaplain', in which he assesses the primary role of the Frankish chaplain in light of the circulation of penitential 'tariff books' originating in Ireland and England. Ultimately, he argues, the Frankish chaplain's primary duty lay not in hearing the individual confessions of conscience-stricken soldiers perturbed by the need for killing, but in the need to ensure the collective purity of Frankish armies and, by extension, the divine patronage of Frankish arms. The church's mission to the military is further explored by Silvia Mostaccio in 'Missionaries and Military in Spanish Europe: Cultural and Religious Issues from the Jesuit Mission in the Army of Flanders (1587–1659)'. Here, Mostaccio's focus is on the clergy themselves and their reactions to the miseries of campaigning and the grim realities of prolonged interconfessional conflict. Significantly, her research reveals an attitudinal shift among those involved in this ministry. Despite their military character and their reputation as the spiritual shock troops of the Counter Reformation, chaplains of the Society of Jesus gradually abandoned their sense of a holy war pursued against heresy, and embraced a more humanitarian and inclusive approach to war and its many victims, regardless of those victims' confessional allegiance.

Pastoral adaptability amid the torrid battlefields of Flanders (historically, part of the notorious, war-torn 'cockpit of Europe') are also salient themes in Mark Chapman's study of the patrician British Army chaplain, the Honourable Maurice Peel, youngest son of Arthur, Viscount Peel. Challenging another clerical caricature – in this case, that of the bumbling, out-of-touch Anglican padre of British First World War mythology – in 'From the Settlements to the Trenches: The First World War Chaplaincy of Maurice Peel', Chapman shows how the Church of England of the early twentieth century was quite capable of generating pastors who were as adept in the military realm as they were in the civilian; indeed how, in this era of mass citizen armies, their skills and attributes flowed readily from one sphere into another. In a conspicuously rare study of air force chaplaincy, Charlotte Methuen pursues this theme into the Second World War, illustrating how a sense of 'parochial' ministry informed the work of a Royal Air Force chaplain in the Far East. Based on the personal letters of its protagonist, the author's grandfather, 'Charles German Hooper, RAF Chaplaincy (1942–46) and the RAF's Moral Leadership Courses in South East Asia (1945–6)' demonstrates how, even in the mid-twentieth century, thousands of miles from home, and in the newest

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and most technological of Britain's armed services, the spiritual care and moral formation of military personnel remained a pastoral imperative for the churches. This was so even while they recognized and sought to develop the capacity of such personnel to shape the moral and religious landscape of post-war British society.

Looking beyond military organizations in Western Europe, two further contributions illustrate the challenges inherent in providing chaplaincy care for expeditionary forces far from home. Dubbed an 'Overseas Army' (though it never left the landmass of central and eastern Europe), the Russian army of the Seven Years' War nonetheless operated in a physically dangerous, culturally alien and morally hazardous environment. As Denis Sdvizhkov elucidates in 'Military Chaplaincy in the Russian Imperial Army during the Seven Years' War (1756–63)', in a strikingly multi-religious army considerable effort was devoted by the Orthodox archpriest Ioann Bogayevsky and the Lutheran pastor Christian Täge to ensure that denominational services were provided, religious friction avoided, and moral standards upheld. Similarly, Ana Amélia G. Dias (winner of the 2024–5 Kennedy Prize for the best article by a postgraduate student) illustrates how, after more than fifty years of exclusion and marginalization at the hands of Brazil's secular First Republic, Brazilian army chaplaincy was resuscitated and reinvigorated under the stresses of the Second World War. In 'A Revived Calling: The Chaplains of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force during the Second World War', she traces the hasty organizational revival of Brazilian army chaplaincy, showing how – in the cauldron of the Italian theatre of war and regardless of previous policy – the intrinsic value of chaplaincy in its Roman Catholic and Protestant forms was manifested among the far-flung and hard-pressed soldiers of an innately religious society.

As much as the church has moulded military organizations, so too has it been shaped by them. The importance of armies (less so navies, given their seagoing nature, or air forces, given their comparative novelty) as vehicles for the growth of Christianity – not merely by dint of violent conquest, as might be imagined – is another trope in this volume. In 'The Roman Army and the Conversion of Northern Britain', Christopher Scargill locates Hadrian's Wall as a springboard for the conversion of late Roman Britain, both north of its line between the North Sea and the Solway Firth, and southward, along its supply routes through what would later become north-west England. If strategic calculation and security concerns helped to drive this process

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in late fourth-century Britain, a millennium later, and in the warmer climes of medieval Padua, the conversion of a formidable warrior people was anticipated as a means of extending Western Christendom and even saving it from its bitterest enemies. As Haoyang Lin explores in 'Armed Mongols in the Oratory of San Giorgio of Padua in the Late Fourteenth Century', local iconography reflected larger, more sustained ambitions for the Christianization of the Mongols and the harnessing of their formidable military power in the continuing, seemingly existential struggle against Islam and the Turks.

The alignment of military and missionary goals, in this case in nineteenth-century India, is further elucidated by Stewart J. Brown in '"Titans of the Punjab": Soldier-Administrators, Christian Missions and Providential Thought in British India, 1845–65'. Here, Brown investigates the conduct and motives of a coterie of imperial Christian warriors. These were evangelicals for whom the growth of Britain's military and colonial power went hand-in-hand with the promotion of Christian missionary work, work which they understood to be entirely consistent with clear providential designs for the conversion of the Punjab and the whole of India. However, the melding of British military and missionary power in the context of occupation was not only evidenced in the context of the British empire. As Peter Howson reveals in 'British Garrison Churches in Germany 1945 to 2019', the defeat of the Third Reich, the occupation of post-war Germany and the imperatives of de-Nazification after 1945 cast the British Army in the role of a victorious Christian presence in north-west Germany and Berlin. Although generally neglected by a civilian church that became increasingly distant from the armed forces in the late twentieth century, British garrison churches were not merely islands of expatriate Britishness – or even of pragmatic pastoral experimentation – but also served as legacies of the civilizational struggle that had been the Second World War and, in a rapidly secularizing age, as material reflections of a culturally Christian army.

The function of military figures and forces in directly shaping civilian church life serves as another thread for the articles in this volume, with three contributions focusing on the turbulent military and religious history of the British Isles in the early modern era. In 'Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and his Hospital: Military Identity, Veterans and the Elizabethan Church, 1571–1603', Angus Crawford illuminates how godly soldiering, politics and philanthropy converged in the creation of a Warwickshire almshouse, or hospital, a project

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which highlighted the Protestant zeal and military credentials of its founder, the earl of Leicester, and, through the appointment of its second chaplain, the controversial Thomas Cartwright, augmented the puritan interest in the town of Warwick. Attempts to steer the course of local ecclesiastical affairs are still more central to Fiona McCall's article '"The Irresistable Authority of a Troop of Horse": The New Model Army and Parish Life', in which she examines the influence of the officers and men of the New Model Army on local church matters that ranged from Sabbath day observance, to prosecutions for witchcraft and the ejection of recalcitrant ministers. If such (armed) interference – not to say intimidation – was widely unpopular, long remembered and sourly memorialized in England, Michael Fraser sheds light on the generally more congenial (among Presbyterians at least) presence and activities of foreign soldiers in early eighteenth-century Scotland. In 'A Later Protestant Invasion: The Scots Kirk and the Dutch and Swiss Forces, 1715–16', he illustrates how the presence of mainly (albeit not exclusively) Calvinist Dutch and Swiss regiments served the fourfold purpose of suppressing Jacobitism, harassing Episcopalians, invigorating church life, and underlining the strength of Protestant (or at least Calvinist) internationalism at a time of heightened domestic tension and insecurity.

The complexities of ecclesiastical-military relations, again in a British context, are explored in a further trio of essays that highlight the limits of church authority and the hazards of state control. As Xiang Wei shows in 'The Kirk in Retreat: The Multi-Confessional British Army and Presbyterian Authority in Early Eighteenth-Century Scotland', the long-term presence of English troops in Scotland proved much less congenial to the Scottish Kirk than did the short-term presence of Dutch and Swiss soldiers. After the Act of Union of 1707, and in the context of a 'bi-confessional British state', an ascendant Kirk was ultimately thwarted in its attempts to impose Presbyterian worship and Presbyterian moral discipline on English soldiers stationed in Scottish garrisons. In the Royal Navy, on the other hand, an Anglican ascendancy endured for more than two centuries after the Act of Union and, in the early twentieth century, the problems that assailed this ascendancy were rather different. In 'Anglicans at Sea: The Church of England, the Royal Navy and the First World War', I show how the privileged status of the Church of England in the 'Senior Service', and the prestige it derived from that position in an age when British naval power was at its zenith, proved to

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be a liability amid the Royal Navy's frustrating performance from 1914 to 1918. Denied Nelsonian glories, and short of Anglican naval heroes, the Navy background of the most notorious Anglican clergyman of the interwar years, Harold Davidson, further embarrassed, rather than redeemed, his very public delinquency. However, the churches' position in Britain's armed forces was hardly plain sailing in other respects during the interwar years. In 1930, as Philip Williamson elucidates in 'Freedom of Worship and the Armed Forces in Early Twentieth-Century England', a church-state clash took place over the government's ban on the use of intercessory prayers for the victims of religious persecution in the Soviet Union in services of several English denominations. Given the compulsory nature of Sunday worship in Britain's armed forces, the Labour government's conciliatory policy towards the Soviets, and historic free church sensitivities over state control in church matters, this issue had all the ingredients for a serious confrontation. That this was averted was due to airy assurances of future consultation over special services and, more significantly, to a new, growing – and very telling – disposition of conformity and compliance towards the state in free church circles.

Beyond the vagaries of institutional relations, the religious virtues of military Christians had an abiding capacity to inspire the wider church. Alastair R. E. Forbes, in 'Symbolic Investiture and Identity-Making in Monastic Accounts of the First Crusade', shows how, in the wake of the Council of Clermont in 1095, monastic chroniclers depicted those invested with the crusader cross as a superior kind of warrior, whose exalted vocation as a 'cross-bearer' was akin to that of a monk. Admiration for more militant expressions of sanctity also provides the subject matter for James Barnaby's study of 'St Edmund and the Battle of Fornham: The Birth of a Warrior Saint?' Here, Barnaby considers how St Edmund's status as a Christian martyr was increasingly qualified and redefined by his reclamation as a warrior, a soldier saint whose power was vindicated – 300 years after his death – at the battle of Fornham (1173), in which his banner was carried to victory by the forces of King Henry II. If the cult of St Edmund consequently prospered in the British Isles, susceptibility to the figure of a saintly warrior and martyr was by no means limited to the medieval, pre-Reformation church. In his study of the pre-eminent soldier saint of the Victorian era, 'Khartoum 1885: The Passion of General Gordon', Mark Whalan examines how the ordeal and death of General Charles Gordon in the Sudan was swiftly transformed into a

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facsimile of Christ's own suffering and death, the deceased (and usefully non-denominational) general being presented as an exemplar of the faith, or even as the catalyst for a new Christian revival. For his part, and for a far more recent conflict, Brandon M. Hurlbert (winner of the 2024–5 President's Prize for the best article by an early career scholar) probes the devotional interaction of soldiers and civilians in 'Soldiers, Psalms, Bibles and Bombs: Praying and Publishing the Psalms during the Iraq War (2003–11)'. Here, Hurlbert illustrates the way in which a limited repertoire of psalms was utilized by American service personnel amid the lethality of war-torn Iraq, showing how the digital and material output of civilian religious agencies helped to frame the religious imaginary of American soldiers on the ground.

The memorialization of wartime suffering is the theme of the remaining essays in this volume. Focusing on the Church's awkward connection to the animal world, even in such a self-styled nation of animal lovers, Joseph Hardwick explores 'The Wartime "mixed community": British Religious Responses to the Service of Military Animals, 1914–39'. The impulse to commemorate the suffering of military animals (especially, but not exclusively, horses) was by no means absent from the churches, though it was all but eclipsed by their memorialization of the human casualties of the First World War. From the evidence of contemporary newspapers, Hardwick reveals how widespread this inclination was, and how it was expressed in ceremonies and memorials during the war and throughout the interwar years. Finally, and turning to the role of religion for troops in captivity, Stephanie Burette presents the work of the British artist Stanley Warren in the confines of Singapore's Changi prisoner of war camp during the Second World War. As Burette discusses in 'Christ and Captivity in the Second World War: Stanley Warren's Murals in Changi Camp', the five murals commissioned by a chaplain and painted by Warren in the chapel of a makeshift hospital were testimonials to the accentuated importance of faith among British and Commonwealth prisoners of war, especially amid the hardships, deprivation and brutality of Japanese captivity. Furthermore, and though lost in the aftermath of the war, in their recovered and restored form Warren's wartime murals have gone on to become icons of hope, endurance and redemption in the post-war world.

Individually, these twenty-two articles, all of which are based on papers presented at the Ecclesiastical History Society's Summer

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Conference and Winter Meeting in 2024–5, tell many different stories, but collectively they represent an evolving and increasingly sophisticated understanding of the church's continuous and multi-faceted relationship with the military. Remarkably, none of these articles focuses upon Christian pacifism or conscientious objection. This is not, it should be emphasized, a result of editorial fiat. Rather, and possibly influenced by the mass of revisionist historiography unleashed by the centenary of the First World War, by the passing of the Vietnam War generation (for whom conscientious objection was a mass phenomenon), and by the re-irruption of a full-scale, interstate war in Europe, it appears as if the study of the church and the military has been recalibrated, now viewed less as a study in moral binaries, and more as a subject that can shed new and compelling light on both.

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